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ABSTRACT

A study explored how Arabic literature textbooks for the seventh grade in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank, and Israel (for Arab schools only) deal with three topics: (1) land; (2) enemy; and (3) hero (in the era of peace). Results indicate that even though former studies provide information about the importance of transferring values to students through reading and school textbooks, in general, the textbooks ignore the peace process topic and focus on hostility toward the enemy. A suggestion is that an educational committee should work to develop a curriculum which deals with living in peace by indicating the similarities and trying to bridge differences between the nations and countries involved in the peace process. Includes three tables of data; contains nine references and two appendixes about textbook censorship and descriptions of the textbooks examined. (BT)

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Curriculum and Peace in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to describe how do Arabic literature textbooks for the seventh grade in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank, and Israel (for Arab schools only) deal with three topics, land, enemy, and hero in the era of peace. The results indicate that even though former studies provide information about the importance of reading and school textbooks in transferring values to students, in general all the textbooks are ignoring the peace process topic and still deal with hostility toward the enemy.

I would like to acknowledge pro. Miriam Ben Perez for her comments, advice, and encouragement thorough the preparation of the study. I also would like to thank Mr. Todd Scott for editing the paper and for the valuable comments he provided.

This study aims to describe how Arabic literature textbooks used to teach the Arabic language to seventh graders in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank, and Israel (textbook used in Arab Israeli schools) deal with values and topics related to the conflict between the Arab countries and Israel.

Background

In order to enable the reader to better understand the results and discussion of this study, I will start by presenting a brief background about the situation in the Middle East for those who are not familiar with it.

At the beginning of the twentieth century most of the countries mentioned above were under British or French mandate. Gradually, the countries began getting their independence, and Arabic became the official language in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. During the fifties this region experienced two trends: first, the unifying pan-Arab movement, which considered Arab ethnicity as a nationalist identity; and second, particularism, which emphasized the unique history and culture of each Arab state.

In 1948 Israel was established on parts of Palestine's lands, while others were ruled either by Egypt (Gaza) or Jordan (West Bank). This take-over of traditional Palestinian property erupted into an ongoing emotional and political conflict, one that Ashrawi (1995) would label as "taken for granted as an on going fact of life," where violence was the daily fare. The enmity between the two became a long conflict that involved several wars through the following three decades in the area and to different maps. In the war of 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza, resulting in their subordination to Israeli Military rule.

In 1979 a peace treaty was signed between Israel and Egypt but the struggle for peace between Israel and different Arab countries remains difficult. On September 1993, a Palestinian-Israeli declaration of principles was signed on the White House lawn, and a transitional phase has begun. Signing the declaration of principals opened the door for other interested Arab countries to go through a negotiation with Israel. On October 1994, Jordan and Israel signed the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab country since the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty.

There are various possible ways to look at the Middle East. First, it can be seen as a home for two nations, one Arab and one Jewish. Secondly, the Middle East can be seen simply as a collection of small countries. Third, it can be seen as the sum of its religious groups, not forgetting that the Middle East is the place of origin for the three celestial religions and the home of the three prophets (Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad). Muslims occupy the majority of the Middle East citizens, while Jews, Christians, and other religions maintain minority status. How each of the countries treats identity, is a topic for additional research.

The education systems in the different countries mentioned above are centralized within each country, and the curriculum and/or textbooks have to be approved by the ministry of education before they can be used in schools.

Schools as Social Agents

Based on Apple's (1990) assumption that education is in no way a neutral enterprise, and believing that schools are one of the social agents in a culture, I was interested to understand how the different countries mentioned above choose to deal with

the political situation in the Middle East through literature textbooks for the seventh graders.

To illustrate the importance of schools, curriculum, and textbooks within such a hotbed of political and cultural diversity, let me cite one of the initial steps the Palestinians did in 1993. After they signed on the declaration of principals with Israel, they began to prepare their own curriculum and assign their own educational goals.

Previous studies show the importance of textbooks. Chield et.l (1944) studied the values in third grade reading textbooks at the United States, the results indicate that it was obvious that the textbooks encourage the development of some behaviors while discourage others. Fisher (1968) tested the assumption that reading materials cause to changes in attitudes. He checked political, social and stereotypical attitudes toward Native Americans on eighteen fifth grade classrooms. His results show that there were obvious evident that reading cause changes in children's attitudes. Lazarus (1967) indicates that "the textbook reflects the society that it is in, it demonstrates the kind of political rules in that society and the values that guide it." Saunders (1979) suggests that the culture reflects the content of the curriculum, which makes the content more important than the curriculum guidelines.

I decided to use literature for two reasons, first, because as Heater (1984) wrote, literature is one of the subject matters that deal frequently with human values. Abu-Baker (1990) echoes this statement in her assertion that "literature might be a key that opens a door to a human and universal values or a key that opens a door to hatred, assassination and revenge." A second reason to focus on literature is that even though in this particular case I deal with textbooks from different countries, they are written in Arabic and all

have the same source material of ancient and modern Arabic Literature. This homogeneity of textbook type allows me to focus my attention not only in the ideological contents of each text, but instead upon the ideological motivation for each respective and distinct country to choose that text.

The third decision I had to make in addition to the use of textbooks and literature was for which audience. The decision was taken based on Kohlbergs' theory of moral development. The seventh graders are about the age of twelve the stage of the conventional ethic where adolescents seek to guard the family, the group they belong to and even the country standards and expectations, were children start to act and identify with people that are in power.

The study question is how does each textbook deal with the Middle East political conflict through its presentation of the land, enemy and hero?

It is important to notice that the Israeli textbook is the one used only in Arab Israeli schools where Arabic is the mother tongue, and the West Bank textbook is the Jordanian textbook censored by the Israeli Military rule that was used up till 1994. Again this is another example that illustrates the direct relation between politics and education. After the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, the Israeli military rule censored the different school textbooks before they allowed their use in the schools-- both in Gaza, where before the war Egyptian textbooks were used, and in the West Bank, previously under Jordanian rule and subject to Jordanian textbooks. This study describes only the textbook that was censored and used in the West Bank. (Appendix 1 will have some examples of the censored pieces)

Research Methods

I read each of the textbooks marking each sentence that is related to the following three topics, characteristics of the Land, who is the Enemy and who is the Hero. Then using index cards I went through each of the sentences based upon the following criteria and wrote down what I found. At the end of each textbook I calculated the number for each criterion and then translated the numbers into percentages. After I was done with all of the textbooks and had the results I ran a Chie square test to check significant differences between the different textbooks.

The criteria of the three topics that were looked out are:

Land: 1) When the word land was mentioned was it defined? (both explicitly and implicitly).

2) How was the land described? a) united, b) generous, or c) sad.

Enemy:1) How was the enemy defined? a) conservative, b) atheist, c) Israeli or Zionist, or d) was not defined at all.

Heroes:1) Who is the hero? Someone a) Brave, b) clever, c) have a great fighting skills, d) believe in God, e) Mujahed, (a person who is willing to die for the sake of God) or f) a fighter for freedom.

A general description of each of the textbooks that includes year of publication, title, number of texts, and general structure are to be founded in appendix 2.

Results

Following the content analyses for the topic of land, table 1 will describe the results for each of the categories and present some differences between the various criterions in the different textbooks.

Table no: 1 Percentage of times each criterion for land was reflected at each of the textbooks

The land is	Lebanon	Syria	Egypt	Jordan	West-Bank	Israel
Defined	38.7%	64.3%	43.5%	40.9%	—	28.6%
Generous	54.8	35.7	47.8	59.1	100	50
Sad	6.5	—	8.7	—	—	21.4
Total	100% (31)	100% (28)	100% (23)	100% (22)	100% (9)	100% (14)

A significant different in the category of land as defined by name was found between the textbooks of Syria and Lebanon as well as between Syria and Israel. In other words, in the Syrian textbook, content related to land was usually defined explicitly or implicitly, while in Lebanon's textbook often times the word "land" was not defined, forcing the reader to make his/her own interpretation of the text. In the Israeli textbook, even when the land was defined, it was not defined as "Israel" or as "Palestine", but as the specific Arab town or city. Land as "generous" existed in all textbooks in a high percentage, with virtually no statistical significant between the different textbooks. The last criterion, describing the land as "sad" show significant differences between Israeli and Syrian textbooks, as well as between Israeli and Jordanian textbooks. To illustrate my point I present here few examples from these different textbooks that exemplify the criterion mentioned in table one.

From the Lebanese textbook a text written by a Lebanese author,

"Lebanon my dearest on earth...what value does the money have or even life have if your land dries out..." (p.18) In this sentence the land is defined explicitly.

Or

"My beloved parents died- tears and blood covered the hills in my country...My parents died quietly since the world refused to hear their screams. They died since they did not

love their enemies like cowards do, and did not hate their beloved ones like thankless do. They died since they wanted peace, they starved in a land of milk and honey." (p.194)

Several characteristics of the land are implied in this paragraph. The land is covered with tears and blood, sad for what is happening to its children. The land is also generous it is a land of milk and honey, yet still her residents are starving, they are dying.

This is a powerful paragraph if you are able to read it in Arabic, and a creative teacher could do a lot of interpretations.

From the Syrian textbook:

"Golan, the cousin of the sun *I miss you*
Yesterday you hugged me as an infant *how could I forget you" (p.43)*

Here the land is defined by an explicit name, "Golan", which is the name for part of Syria that was occupied by Israel.

Another example, this one is from the Egyptian textbook a title of a poem (p.41) "*to the young of the Niles*". In this case the land is defined explicitly by using the "Niles".

In the Jordanian textbook, land is mentioned several times, but more in providing facts than in emotional tone. For example,

"The Arab countries are rich...the land was generous toward them both in agriculture and oil..." (p. 60)

In the Israeli textbook specific names of specific Arab towns and villages are the common way used to describe places. The land it self is undefined, neither Israel nor Palestine is ever mentioned explicitly.

"Hello *my fathers' land*
Its great to be hear *and great to sing" (p.106)*

The second topic is the Enemy. Table two presents how the Enemy was described through out the different textbooks. It is important to distinguish that these textbooks

present images of "enemies" in the context of nationalistic values, and not simply social ones.

Table no': 2 Percentage of times each criterion of enemy was reflected at each of the textbooks

The Enemy is the	Lebanon	Syria	Egypt	Jordan	West-bank
Conservative	—	3.1%	—	—	—
Atheist	—	3.1	43.5%	16%	25%
Israel/Zionism	—	28.2	8.7	32	—
Not defined	100% 3	65.6	47.8	52	75
Total	100% (3)	100% (32)	100% (23)	100% (25)	100% (16)

For example, in the Israeli textbook there was not even one time that "enemy" was mentioned neither explicitly nor implicitly in a national context (that is the reason the Israeli textbook does not appear in table 2). But stupidity was mentioned twice as the enemy of progress and development, which is a social value that is not less important but a different domain. Much the same thing occurs in the Lebanese's textbook, where hunger was described as the enemy of human dignity.

Regarding the category of the "enemy" as an "atheist", the Chie square test reveals significant differences between the Egyptian textbook and the Syrian ($p<0.01$) and between the Egyptian and the Jordanian ($p<0.05$), and also between the Syrian and the one from the West Bank ($p<0.05$). The high number in this category for the Egyptian textbook goes back to the structure of the textbook, which had the higher number of texts from the ancient literature, a literature that discussed Islamic wars, and was aimed to spread the religion among atheist or non-Muslims.

The differences between the results of the West Bank textbook and the Jordanian can be attributed to censorship, censorship enacted by the Israeli military to curb West Bank discussion of topics such as land, country, and fighting the enemy. That left texts dealing with "enemies" explicitly identified not as other nationalities, but instead as atheists-- unless teachers and students chose to interpret otherwise.

It is obvious by now that the censorship will not keep texts from dealing with Israel or Zionism as enemies, yet still that remains the reason why this category is null for the West Bank textbook.

Significant differences were also found between the results for the Egyptian textbook and for the Jordanian one. All of these textbooks deal with undefined enemies often, and all of these textbooks treat their undefined enemies in similar ways—suggesting that not only does the idea of an enemy remain an active presence for the middle eastern mind, but that the definitive image of the enemy is left in the hands of the reader or in this case, the teacher responsible for interpreting the text. Teachers could teach students to read and understand the new words of the content, solve some problems and move on, or they could analyze and interpret the possible meanings or make some comparison with an actual situation from the students' daily life.

Some examples to illustrate how these categories were represented through the textbooks are:

From the Egyptian textbook: *"the enemy built a high wall out of sand" (p.81)* In this case the enemy is not defined.

"Many times he met his cousin and heard him telling a hereon stories about the Muslims through their wars against the enemy of God..." (p. 173) Here the enemy is defined as the enemy of God.

Page 61 on the Jordanian textbook, *"It is not a secret that most of the western countries stood against the Arab in their struggle against Zionists for Palestine."* The enemy here is defined as Zionists.

From the West Bank textbook,

" She promised the prophet that she will join the battle against the atheist the enemies of God" (p.38). The enemy is defined as those who do not believe in God.

From the Syrian textbook,
"Today is October seventh 1973, it is two p.m. ... he is happy, his dream became true, he was ordered to command an army unit and fight the enemy in the area of Mansura in the Golan." (p.17)

Although the enemy is not defined explicitly, the day, time and place of a historical incident make it easy to know just who the enemy was. The details given are regarding the 1973 war between Syria and Israel.

The third topic is the hero. Table three presents the distribution of the results for each of the categories in each of the textbooks.

There are no significant differences between any of the textbooks in two of the criteria, the hero as a brave, and the hero as mujahed.

Significant differences exist between the Egyptian textbook and the Lebanese ($p<0.001$), and between the Egyptian and the Syrian ($p< 0.05$) in the criterion of the hero as the one who believes in God. The reason Egypt had such a high percentage for this criterion is the same as the reason for having high percentage of enemy as atheists, in that the structure of the textbook is built primarily around ancient literature. In the West Bank textbook a high percentage of the hero as believer in God or Mujahed exist. The reason is that texts from ancient Arabic literature were not censored since they did not hold explicit ideas about struggling in our days. What the censorship did not recognize was that although these are ancient texts they can be interpreted according to the situation in our

days. The heroes who believed in God and those who fought for religious matters (mujahed) hundred of years ago still can do that in our days, against those he/she thinks are God's enemy.

Table no': 3 Percentage of times each criterion was reflected at each of the textbooks

The Hero	Lebanon	Syria	Egypt	Jordan	West Bank	Israel
Brave	27.3%	38.5%	22.9%	33.3%	14.4%	---
Believer in God	---	7.7	28.6	15.2	42.8	---
Mujahed	45.4	38.5	25.7	48.5	42.8	---
Skillful fighter	---	---	14.3	---	---	---
Clever	---	---	8.5	3	---	100%
Freedom fighter	27.3	15.3	---	---	---	
Total	100% (11)	100% (39)	100% (35)	100% (33)	100% (15)	100% (2)

Here are some examples from the different textbooks:

The Egyptian textbook,

"Omar thought that Aqaba is going to be one of the Islamic heroes, he fights very well and his fighting skills have increased since he was young." (p.173)

This is an example of the hero as the person who has good fighting skills.

The Lebanese textbook suggests,

"Heroes are not afraid to die for freedom...to die for freedom is better than to live in surrender" (p.196) The hero here is the person who is ready to die for his freedom.

An Arab Israeli teacher who teaches Arabic in a junior high school went through some of the books' chapters and duplicated the study, his results matched the researcher

in 84%.

Discussion

Peres (1993) claimed in his book "The new Middle East" that Israelis and Arabs were so bound up in fighting each other that they missed opportunities to make peace. But now that this opportunity is so real, and that enemies such as Arafat and the late Rabin were able to shake hands, we should not save any effort in order to make peace work.

Throughout the peace negotiation different committees were established to discuss important matters such as water. Unfortunately we never heard about any committee discussing education matters, although the education system is the system that could reach out to the largest number of regular people, and could work to change attitudes and teach about the possibility of living in peace to the next generation. It is not that I believe we should ignore the past, but we should utilize knowledge about the past as a lens to view our future, to view the changes necessary to accomplish progress. As Kierkegaard (1843) wrote, "life should be lived forwards," so lets learn from the mistakes of the past to build a better future for our children. To make it possible, it is not enough to watch two countries' leaders shake hands-- we need to make sure people understand the importance of peace after such a long enmity, as Ahrawi called it.

The results of the textbooks' analyses in this study are not very encouraging. The values that students are receiving in the nineties are still far from preparing them to accept the new Middle East. It is not that I think we should dictate changes, but that we should at least enable students to see that there is another alternative to wars that they have a choice to make when they "read" the situation.

As educators we should not be concerned only with what is written but also with what is not, in other words what is referred to as "Null Curriculum." By ignoring the peace process, especially in the Egyptians and Arab Israeli textbooks (where a peace treaty was signed since 1979), these books still transfer a message. Zultek (1987) studied the Arab's image in Hebrew textbooks and concluded that the small number of times a textbook dealt with the topic of the Arab image transferring values to students. He stated that "the way textbooks ignore dealing with the topic of the Arab minority in Israel, is very bad, since it ignores a topic that is very important to the daily life of our children" (p.80). I will add that ignoring to deal with the topic inside schools enables other social agents to transfer the message they want without the educators' ability to criticize. For example, although the Israeli authorities took out most of the national values from school textbooks, people and students in all ages still went out and struggled, some even losing their lives for the land and country they love. The curriculum was far from what students lived in, it did not communicate for the students the values and topics that seemed most relevant to their daily existence, so the result was more power to the null curriculum. Topics that the Israelis tried to avoid teaching at schools in the West Bank were dealt with at homes, streets, neighborhoods and mosques. And here again we can reference Sounders' claim that curriculum content is very important, but even more important is the interaction between teachers and students, and between students and curriculum, between what is going on in schools and what is going outside (milieu). It is the dialogue, the mediation of this type of political and social knowledge that operates in the primary role of the social mean.

I do think that more studies should be conducted regarding schools textbooks, curriculum, interaction and developing critical thinking. Changes should be done according to current and future needs of the area. I also think that it is time to start an educational committee that will work to develop a curriculum which deals with living in peace, that will indicate the similarities and try to bridge differences between the nations and countries involved in the peace process.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. To study the Hebrew literature textbooks for the Jewish schools in Israel.
2. To study the Hebrew literature textbooks for the Arab Israeli school.
3. To conduct a future study that involves, in addition to textbooks, classroom observations, Curriculums, and assignment through the textbooks.

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Appendix 1

The censorship could be summarized in five different ways,

1. Getting rid of one unit that it's explicit topic is "Palestine" or struggling against the enemy.
2. Getting rid of only one paragraph out of a composition.
3. Getting rid of only one sentence or a word.
4. Getting rid of assignments.
5. Getting rid of pictures.

I will present some examples from the original textbook that were censored by the Israeli military administration, in fact the censorship took out words, sentences, paragraph, story, or even a picture.

Two lines from one poem that was taken out, since it called people not to capitulate. It does not mention Israel in an explicit way, but when you are the enemy who is seen as the pencil breaking and the arm cutting, you do not want students to even read this poem, especially if you are in a position that allow you to do so.

"Break the pencils will it prevent the hands from digging into the boulder
Cut of the arms will it prevent the eyes to stare in a huge hunger"

The next example is getting rid only from one word,
The third area includes: Egypt, the Negev in the captured Palestine and Syria
After censor,
The third area includes Egypt, the Negev and Syria.
One word was taken out "Captured" which cause to a different meaning. To capture a land mean it is a temporary situation and that you should struggle and release it from the captures, but when this word was taken out it says that this is the normal situation.

Appendix 2

A general description of the textbooks used in this study

From Lebanon,

Textbook title:	"Almufied fie alqeraah waladab" for seventh grade.
Year of preparation:	1972
Edition:	1991
Prepared by:	A team
Include assignments:	Yes
Include pictures:	Yes (colorful)
Introduction:	Yes.

82% of are from modern literature

From Syria,

Textbook title:	"Alqeraah walnosus" for seventh grade.
Year of preparation:	1985
Edition:	1991
Prepared by:	A team
Include assignments:	Yes
Include pictures:	No
Introduction:	Yes (short).

77% of are from modern literature

From Egypt,

Textbook title:	"Almua'llem fie allugha alarabiyya" for seventh grade.
Year of preparation:	---
Edition:	1995
Prepared by:	One person
Include assignments:	Yes
Include pictures:	No
Introduction:	Yes (short).

43% of are from modern literature

From Jordan,

Textbook title:	"Allugha Alarabiyya" for the seventh grade.
Year of preparation:	1967
Edition:	1977
Prepared by:	A team

Include assignments: Yes
Include pictures: Yes (black & white)
Introduction: Yes

62% of are from modern literature

From the West Bank

Textbook title: "Allugha Alarabiyya" for the seventh grade.
Year of preparation: 1967
Edition: 1979
Prepared by: A team & censored
Include assignments: Yes
Include pictures: Yes (black & white)
Introduction: Yes

60% of are from modern literature

From Israel (The Arab Sector Only)

Textbook title: "Almuchtar min eladab alarabie" for the seventh grade.
Year of preparation: 1985
Edition: 1989
Prepared by: A team
Include assignments: No
Include pictures: Yes (black & white)
Introduction: No

73% of are from modern literature